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POSITION PAPER ON MIDDLE SCHOOL.

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IN 1963, THE JAMESVILLE-DEWITT BOARD OF EDUCATION ORDERED THE INVESTIGATION OF VARIOUS SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PROGRAMS TO DETERMINE WHICH PROGRAM OFFERED THE BEST OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENT GROWTH. THE INVESTIGATION CONCLUDED THAT A MIDDLE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION (5-4-3 GRADE DIVISION) WOULD MORE EFFICIENTLY FULFILL STUDENT GROWTH NEEDS. SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS BEGIN A NEW ADOLESCENT CYCLE AND REQUIRE SPECIALIZED FACILITIES, INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMS, AND MASTER TEACHERS (TRAINED IN TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND PARTICULAR DISCIPLINES) WHICH MIDDLE SCHOOLS CAN OFFER. THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PLACES GRADES 6 AND 9 IN MORE NATURAL SETTINGS AND ALLOWS FOR EASIER SOCIOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENTS. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES MEAN LITTLE, HOWEVER, WITHOUT FACILITY AND CURRICULUM CHANGE. CONSEQUENTLY, A CURRICULUM COUNCIL RECOMMENDED THAT EACH MIDDLE SCHOOL CONSIST OF 3 SUBSCHOOLS OF APPROXIMATELY 325-350 PUPILS, WITH AN ORGANIZATION FOR DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS. THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM SEEKS TO AVOID THE REGIMENTATION OF GRADE SCHOOL AND THE PRESSURES OF HIGH SCHOOL AND TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT. MASTER TEACHERS AND EFFICIENT GUIDANCE PROGRAMS FURNISH THE KEY TO ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN GRADES 6, 7, AND 8. INCLUDED IN THE DOCUMENT IS A RECENT TEXAS STUDY OF 7-8, 7-8-9, AND 6-7-8 GRADE PLANS LISTING THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF EACH. (GB)

JAMESVILLE-DEWITT
CENTRAL SCHOOL

POSITION PAPER

on

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Harold J. Rankin

November 1966

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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School organization and its effect on students and the learning process have been discussed for almost a hundred years. Educators at the end of the nineteenth century sought the elimination of the 8-4 program and the organization of the six-year secondary program. It was believed that the secondary school program should begin in the seventh grade and continue through the twelfth grade without a break in continuity. There was no debate concerning the need for the six-year elementary and a separate six-year secondary school. Neither was there, apparently, any study to reinforce the need for such a change. Credit for such thinking among the educators of that day goes to president Eliot of Harvard. An address by the President Elect to the N.E.A. in 1892 led to the appointment of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies. This group in 1893 recommended an introduction to secondary school subjects prior to grade nine.

The 6-3-3 plan came into being in 1909, either in Columbus, Ohio, or in Berkeley, California. F. Stanley Hall's volumes on adolescence in 1905, the "drop-out" studies by Ayers, Strayer and others in 1907-11, and other factors brought about this historic event. A change in organization was felt to be so badly needed, and the reasons for establishing a separate junior high school appeared to be so conclusive, that now over 80 percent of the children of this age level are educated in a 6-3-3 or 6-6 plan of organization.

Now some fifty years later school administrators and other educational leaders are re-examining the 6-3-3 plan to determine if another form of organization might not promote a better educational program. One of the most prominent organizational patterns being attempted and promoted is the 5-3-4 plan, or middle school.

May we briefly review how we at Jamesville-DeWitt have reached a conclusion to move to the middle school organization.

Three years ago the Board of Education realized it would be necessary to add buildings to both our elementary and secondary program. They felt that buildings were constantly built to house expanding school enrollments with little thought to the social, psychological and academic needs of pupils. They were concerned about the traumatic experience some pupils have in adjusting to the junior high school, and the apparent lack of achievement of junior high school pupils. From teacher and parent reports it seemed pupils were not being challenged academically and were mimicking the habits of high school students socially.

They proposed that we study the organization of school or the age grouping of pupils to determine which age or grade groupings should be housed in the same building to offer the best opportunity for the complete growth of students.

They asked Syracuse University, through the School Study Council, to study the problem and present a written report. They also asked the administrative staff to do likewise. Administrators and teachers traveled to several schools in the country that were experimenting with different types of organizations and reported their observations. They held numerous special meetings or hearings where teachers, administrators, parents and citizens, whose work was relative to the development of children, expressed their views. They examined and discussed written reports and surveys on the subject from teachers, administrators, college professors and school men from outside our district. Some twenty meetings were held with the faculty to gain their insights concerning this issue. Out of these reports and meetings came the following conclusions concerning the middle school:

1. It was found that children are learning more and at an earlier age today than ever before and thus academically students should have the

advantage of academic specialists and more advanced equipment and facilities one year earlier, or grade six.

2. This is the center of similarity of growth characteristics. The age group 10-plus to 13 is in a similar developmental and difficult growth period that sets them apart as a distinct group from those younger or older. This age group needs personal attention which is not received sufficiently in any other type of organization. This age group needs to be together with excellent teaching personnel.

3. Individual differences are greater at the 10-plus to 13 age level. Pupils in this age group need better grouping and opportunities for individual and continuous progress.

4. A staff should be trained for this age level.

5. It removes the more sophisticated and mature ninth grade student from the younger and less spohisticated seventh grader and eliminates the structural Carnegie Unit problems.

6. It would also be possible to make the transition from the so-called elementary program to the departmentalized secondary program much easier because the change would not occur at the identical time that pupils would be changing buildings and struggling with self awareness.

7. It would be beneficial to teachers, pupils and total program if elementary and secondary teachers could be combined in one school permitting better K-12 understanding and correlation. The two philosophies are different and need merging.

8. It would put children from an entire district together one year earlier than at present and possibly aid them sociologically.

Children are learning more and at an earlier age than ever before and should have the advantage of academic specialists and better facilities. Certain facilities such as science, math, reading and language laboratories, shops, homemaking rooms, and business education rooms are quite expensive to build and equip. They are, therefore, usually found only in junior and senior high schools. By building a middle school these facilities will be available to children one year sooner. Sixth graders who are well advanced from what they were ten years ago, to say nothing of fifty years ago, need and deserve full access to these facilities and teachers. Further if we project a few years in the future with the improvement in our elementary programs and the improved efficiency of elementary teachers,

sixth grade pupils will have greater need for better facilities. Perhaps you could argue that these could be made available in our elementary schools but from a pragmatic point of view economy will probably not permit it. Complete science laboratories, language labs, a modern resource center to aid in indepent study, large group instruction rooms, more extensive music and art facilities, a greater variety of audio visual equipment and facilities along with small work areas for pupils and teachers will be provided for all sixth graders one year earlier than under the 6-6 plan. By not having these available for these pupils we may be holding back their potential development. Goldberg points out that this is the age group where underachievers seem to develop and perhaps with better facilities for their use and more lab experience instead of constant textbook instruction we may be able to prevent some underachievers. These facilities, teachers felt, would be advantageous to those sixth graders who are maturing rapidly and outgrowing the services and facilities of the elementary school. They would also be quite advantageous for those children developing slowly for there would be special materials, equipment, and personnel to meet their needs.

The junior high school concept was started about fifty years ago to meet the needs of children in the early part of the century. Today it is common observation that sixth graders are more mature than the sixth grader of 1915. How much more mature will he be fifty years from now? There is a constant pressure due to the needs of modern society and new pedagogical and academic discoveries to teach subjects in lower grades. Thus algebra has moved from the ninth grade to the seventh or eighth and the first year of foreign language study has moved from ninth or tenth grade to the fourth grade. Indeed many international experts today maintain that such advanced subjects can be taught in an intellectually respectable form to elementary school children. Therefore

these youngsters need and deserve some qualified academic specialists as well as facilities. If it was right to move the seventh and eighth grade out of the elementary school fifty years ago why is it not good judgment to consider moving the sixth grade out now since today sixth graders are academically advanced beyond the seventh graders of fifty years ago? Since the curriculum has changed much during the past fifty years, how much more will it change during the next fifty? We feel that the middle school organization may best help its teachers and our children to meet these current developments and future innovations.

This is the center of similar growth characteristics. Gessell and Ilg in "The Years from Ten to Sixteen" point out that age eleven or grade six marks the beginning of the adolescent cycle. It brings out many tokens of the adolescent cycle such as:

1. He displays unaccounted forms of self assertion, curiosity and sociability.
2. He is restive, investigative, talkative.
3. He is increasingly inquisitive about adults, and observes them with keen interest.
4. E motional life has peaks of intensity and variable moods.
5. His emotional patterns are in the process of development.
6. His physiological reorganization is beginning.

As a result they add in general there is often a turn for the worse in school behavior. They are beginning to struggle to grow up and need special attention and understanding. This is the beginning of a difficult age.

Gessell and Ilg in discussing the twelve year old or grade seven writes that many show strong emotional reactions; they either hate school or love it. It is hard to establish a group structure because all are trying to express themselves. Heterosexual interest begins to appear and teachers need to have patience but

predominantly girls stay with girls and boys with boys. They are still struggling to find themselves.

Thirteen or grade eight is a year of complex transition which involves mind, body and personality, assert the above authors. He is peculiarily in need of sympathetic understanding. He indulges in many private worries and is touchy. It is still a very difficult period.

Age fourteen or ninth grade on the other hand occupies a zone of maturity. He is outgrowing the limitations of the lower grades. He is better oriented to himself and his interpersonal environment and his physiological change, in most cases, is practically complete. He is grown up and somewhat resents "little kids".

Thus it would appear that the 11-13 year old or the 6-7-8th grader is struggling through a difficult growth period and may benefit by separation from the "child" in fifth grade and the "mature" ninth grader. In our survey of teachers they concurred with Gessell and Ilg and this philosophy or point of view.

Individual differences are greater and pupils need a more individualized program. This may seem like a contradiction of the second point concerning growth characteristics but it is not. Children enter kindergarten with individual differences but since they have only had five years of experience in our society the differences are not as great as the child who has had twelve to eighteen years experience. High school students probably have greater academic differences than do 6-7-8th grade students or any elementary groups. However, the high school students as they approach adulthood become more alike socially and emotionally than do the intermediate or middle school students who are growing rapidly but at different rates toward maturity. If this age group, as indicated, have a wider spread of individual differences, then they need a more individualized program. This is difficult to do in the present junior high

school because of the tradition of the program as an exploratory one and because of the attitude of teachers toward the purpose and program. It would seem easier to change the program and philosophy if we changed the structure and teachers could start anew. This could and has been accomplished in the present junior high school set-up but it is difficult and seldom does happen. To be successful and meet the needs of this group and program, curriculum and attitude toward individual differences must be changed. This is a very difficult point to prove empirically but a survey of teachers substantiated the theory and several experts in the field have concurred.

We believe because of the type of children we are dealing with that a special staff should be chosen and trained to work with this age group. For some time the argument has ensued whether a master teacher should be trained and efficient in the methodology of teaching, the learning process and child psychology or whether he should be a scholar in a particular discipline. We have concluded that students need a teacher who is proficient in both in order to adequately meet the particular needs of this age pupil. In order to guide and direct individualized instruction the teacher must be an expert in his field and have knowledge of all the available material in the field. At the same time these students, because of the apparent unique characteristics and problems of this age need a teacher who thoroughly understands child development and can offer guidance and support when needed. Therefore, teachers should be chosen who are particularly interested in this age group, understands them and is still a proficient enough scholar to direct their academic growth and supply depth in the field. As Bruner points out it is not teaching devices but teachers who are the principal agents of instruction and it takes a master teacher to develop independent study material and lead pupils in individualized instruction and the efficient use of the facilities provided.

Therefore the master teacher must know how to be a physicist if he is to teach physics. On the other hand he must clearly understand the child with whom he is working. A well trained middle school faculty working together with proper leadership and guidance should develop this well rounded proficiency. Sixth grade pupils as well as seventh and eighth graders should have the advantage of this type teacher and it is difficult if not impossible to find them in the elementary school primarily, I suppose, because of their training which is controlled by teachers colleges and certification requirements. Of course in time this could change or an elementary teacher could continue his education in a particular discipline on his own. However, I wonder if we have time to wait. One problem in the present junior high school is that teachers are trained for the secondary level and are high school oriented and many would rather teach in high school if openings were available. *How many times* are teachers "promoted" to the senior high when they become "efficient"? We must find teachers who are interested in this 11-13 age group and desirous of helping them through this difficult period and not merely someone who wants to get away from the academic pressures of high school. These teachers need to be not only academically competent but also possess a thorough understanding of the pre-adolescent and his problems. School systems need to secure teachers and principals who have chosen this age group as their field and who intend to remain in it. Colleges still largely neglect the junior high or middle school field and unless pre-service and in-service educational opportunities are made available to those in the middle school field many middle schools or junior high schools will exist in name only. Too little research is available on early adolescent psychology and the education of this age group. Too few teachers are aware of what is available. Teachers and administrators should study both the curriculum and the nature of early adolescents

if they are ever to provide a curriculum that fully meets the needs of this group and we need a group of teachers who are vitally interested in doing just this. We would suggest that special certification requirements be set up for this group and that colleges strengthen their early adolescent teacher training program.

The decision to work toward a middle school organization means that the ninth grade will be placed with the high school. We decided this could be beneficial. A student's college and vocational preparatory program is usually considered to consist of his last four years of public school: grades nine through twelve. Thus when he enters ninth grade many choices are made and courses selected in light of what he hopes to be, the type of courses he should take, and what subject he will major in. Many subject area curriculums are cumulative from ninth grade. The bookkeeping details of secondary education (for example, the Carnegie Unit) and of college entrance requirements assume a nine through twelve high school program. For these reasons if the ninth grade is in a separate junior high school there must be duplication of courses and facilities for those who fail and for those who need advanced placement equipment in their ninth grade courses. Furthermore, the physical separation of the ninth grade faculty from the senior high school faculty means that the development and coordination of courses is more difficult to achieve and maintain. There also should be social and emotional advantages in accordance with the aforementioned physiological development. These pupils are at a stage of maturity that many feel should lead us to consider separating them from seventh and eighth graders who are at a different stage. Most parents we discussed this phase with concurred and felt the move was long overdue.

It will also be possible to make the transition from the so-called elementary program and self-contained classroom to the departmentalized secondary program much easier because the change would not occur at the identical time that pupils

were changing buildings and were struggling with self-awareness. This is almost self explanatory. Teachers inform us that many children have a traumatic experience in changing from the elementary school to the junior high school because of the change to complete departmentalization, the adjustment to larger groups and new friends, at the same time that they are making other emotional adjustments of plain growing up. Some may not be ready to accept full departmentalization but will need the support of a one classroom teacher situation. In the middle school we may be able to make the transition slower and easier because tradition does not demand that the sixth grade is departmentalized and with a change in the teacher's philosophy which we spoke of earlier, we may be able to remove some of the pressures. The transition may be less traumatic if all these things did not happen at once. Perhaps a less competitive structure would be beneficial to this age group. We know that sociological and psychological problems affect academic performance and there are many at this age. True, this could be done in a regular junior high school but it has not and would be difficult because of the traditional junior high attitude.

It would be beneficial to total program if elementary and secondary teachers could be combined in one school. It would permit K-12 understanding and correlation. The two philosophies are different and need merging. This may be a very minor advantage depending on the school system but it seems in too many instances elementary and secondary people talk a completely different language. One is interested in the child and his growth and usually his emotional and physical welfare while the secondary teacher seems to be interested in subject matter. This is a general statement and I am sure there are individual exceptions; none the less it seemed to be accepted as a general truth when we discussed it with teachers. They further felt there was too little communication between the two

groups and particularly, at this age level, there should be communication and understanding. Further many teachers thought this group, if brought together, might help to correlate the total K-12 program and its philosophy.

Finally, this change would place pupils from an entire district together one year earlier than at present and this could have sociological advantages. This could be particularly true in large districts and in districts with integration and other socio-economic problems. There are few districts with more than one elementary school and more than one neighborhood area that does not have different socio-economic levels and from all we know about this problem the sooner we can bring the youngsters together the better. Many teachers mentioned that children could have a fresh start in a new school one year earlier and this for some could be an advantage. That is they can detach themselves from old labels, make new friends, and develop new rapport with teachers and the school.

William J. Yost in 1962 studied the Junior High School set-up in Texas with the following results which seem to support our position.

Limitations of 7-8-9

1. Inflexible requirements of the Carnegie Unit system.
2. Undesirable influence of older ninth grade students on the more immature seventh grade student.
3. Very wide age span with larger number of failing students.
4. Programming difficulties. (Use special facilities scheduling for small numbers.)
5. Tendency to make 7-8-9 "Little High School".

Advantages of 6-7-8

1. Maturity range of 6-7-8 vs. 7-8-9 makes transition from elementary to high school easier.
2. More flexible scheduling is allowed since administrators are not forced to program around the ninth grade.

3. Teacher recruitment is improved.

4. Over emphasis on junior high school athletics is eliminated.

5. Sixth graders are given more facilities and responsibilities.

6. Plan removes ninth graders and subsequent problems.

7. Provides a more academic approach as opposed to the "Little High School" idea.

He concludes that:

1. Existing facilities help to determine practice rather than needs of students.

2. Carnegie Unit is a controlling factor in that it restricts flexibility.

3. Which age levels to include in the junior high or middle school unit is an important problem affecting school spirit, leadership roles, boy-girl relations, etc., and deserve careful consideration.

Conant speaks of this problem in his "Education in the Junior High School Years" without any definite conclusions except that organization is not as important as the program provided for adolescent youth. We would be quick to concur with this. If you change from the standard junior high school to 6-7-8 organization you have done little or nothing if you do not adapt the program and the facilities to meet this age group.

As a result of our study and conclusions the Board charged the Superintendent and staff with responsibility of setting up a program to meet these objectives. We firmly believe that in order for any change to have any opportunity for success, the school staff must be involved as early as possible and must participate fully as a program progresses. The staff felt that two areas were of great concern, (1) the building itself and (2) the curriculum. It was their contention that the physical plant had to meet the needs of the type of program advocated in the above principles. It was their concern that such a program be designed to meet the

individual academic, social and emotional needs of the youngster and to make his transition from elementary to secondary school as easy as possible. To this end a faculty and administrative body called the Curriculum Council devoted their energies. This body, composed of departmental chairmen on the secondary level and specialists in mathematics, science and social studies at the elementary level named teacher-leaders, along with principals of the various schools and the central office staff headed by the Superintendent carried on extensive research in this area. During the school year meetings were held by this group and all 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grade teachers. They met alternately as departments and as grade level teachers. The departments discussed the philosophy, content and problems of the academic discipline, then the groups changed to grade levels and discussed the problems and effect of programs on the particular age or grade level. Teachers, guidance personnel and administrators visited selected schools from the Boston and the eastern seaboard area to the Chicago area and south to Melbourne, Florida and reported back to the group. This group came up with the following recommendations:

1. The middle school should consist of three houses, each containing grades six, seven and eight.

2. Each house should have a total population of approximately 325-350 pupils.

3. Each student should remain in the same house for three years so that closer pupil-teacher relationships will be fostered.

4. The guidance program should be strengthened by the recognition of individual abilities and talents. Behavioral problems should be recognized earlier and each student should benefit from a more direct contact with guidance personnel. Guidance personnel should aid teachers directly in understanding pupils and placement for meeting individual needs.

5. By establishing a school within a school esprit de corps will be developed and more opportunities for participation, leadership and socialization should evolve. These will improve the self-concept of students.

6. An inclusion of a resource enter to afford the opportunities for individual study and growth. This center should include listening and viewing centers, A-V equipped carrels and conference rooms where students may come for additional help.

7. The construction of a large group instruction room to enable a large number of students to be exposed to outstanding presentations by faculty members and guest lecturers.

8. To maintain flexibility of design and scheduling to permit adaptation to the best type of instruction for the individual student.

9. The staff of the middle school should be composed of teachers who are interested in the individual child and are scholars in their chosen field.

10. All special facilities normally found in the modern high school should be available.

11. The curriculum and program should be individualized to such an extent that each pupil may have the opportunity to move at his own pace in accordance with his own potential.

12. Independent study material should be prepared to facilitate individual progress.

13. Flexible scheduling and grouping should allow for continuous progress.

14. The guidance department should be the focal point for instruction and programming of pupils in each house.

The Board of Education then directed the Curriculum Council and fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grade teachers to plan a building to facilitate the philosophy and program. We then followed the same procedure used in our previous meetings and the total group designated the type and arrangement of facilities and the departments designated the specific requirements for individual rooms. When these were completed they were turned over to the architect who was instructed to design a building in accordance with these specifications. Each department then worked with the architect to interpret their ideas and to make sure that the necessary facilities as planned were in the building. One thing the staff insisted on was flexibility, since we could not be sure how our program and utilization of facilities might change after we had tried them out. We feel that many of our ideas will need adjustment and change in order to best meet the needs of this age group.

In regard to the need for change and flexibility, Bush and Allen in their book New Design for High School Education state:

"The extensive critical public discussion of the American high school has led to the conclusion that even though the high school was a pacesetter in the last century and has been a vital factor in helping to achieve a high standard of living, this is no time for complacency. Quite the opposite. Now is the time to move in new directions and to dream again a new American dream and conceive a new standard for ourselves and possibly for the world.

"The new goal which is now beginning to emerge refers not to amounts and numbers (i.e., everyone in school for a given number of years) -- a quantitative standard of the past -- but rather a quality of excellence to be achieved in the education provided for everyone in high school. While the debate over what shall constitute an education of the highest quality for each pupil has not been concluded, more than a suggestion emerges that the new aim may be even more lofty in its conception than its predecessor. The new goal emerginging from public discussion of secondary education is this: All youth shall, by the end of compulsory schooling, be so launched in a broad, liberal education that they will continue such education as a lifelong pursuit. Further, each person's education will have been so planned that he will have opportunity to develop, as early as his talents are discovered, and be encouraged to develop one or more lines of specialization which will represent the flowering of his own unique interests and abilities. The new concept is one that holds that the level of education needed in the next half-century -- adequate to meet the needs of the nation as well as of the individual -- requires that for everyone both a liberal and a specialized education shall have been well begun by the end of compulsory schooling. The American school must evolve new, more efficient and effective measures to its ends lest it fail in its new mission.

"With mounting knowledge and increased sophistication about children, their educational needs, and how they learn, it becomes difficult to ignore the fact that not all children do need the same amount of time to learn specific things. Nor do all children come to school with equal backgrounds and talents. Some pupils with excellent achievement and background in one subject would be better off if they were to spend their time in studying another subject rather than in serving time to meet a requirement. The present lock-step of six years to graduate and rigid set of course requirements makes little sense. Hard and fast rules that will fit all pupils are difficult if at all possible to find. Thus while the curriculum as a whole must be designed, that portion of it in which each individual is scheduled to enroll should result from an objective, highly personalized diagnosis of his needs. Pertinent questions emerge: Could not requirements be arrived at and stated more flexibly so that these important differences in pupils are taken into account?"

We therefore believe that the middle school should be flexible enough to allow for all types of instruction from large group to independent study. Each pupil

should have the opportunity to pursue each subject or discipline in as much depth as he is able and desires. Certain pupils might perform better in a self-contained classroom with ample opportunity for individual enrichment. There are many who would argue for this type instruction. Other pupils might advance faster and more efficiently in a core type program while still others might be ready for complete departmentalization and even independent study. We have found occasionally a sixth grader who can handle independent study and yet many twelfth graders who cannot. Perhaps the difference is mental ability, maturation, desire or interest in a particular area. We feel practical research and study is needed to better understand how this age group learns best and why. The middle school without the pressures of the high school should permit this type of study. We hypothesize that since children are different that each type of organization will be necessary to meet the individualized needs of each child. We further hypothesize that the time spent in both instruction and study should vary for different children depending on their background in the subject area, their motivation or interest for the material and their ability to handle the concepts of the discipline. We, therefore, hope to follow the continuous learning program of Newton, Massachusetts and the flexible scheduling of the Chicago Laboratory School. How we correlate these two programs and how we schedule individual pupils with teachers will be a real challenge to the faculty and will need extensive in-service study which we are conducting at present. Our staff has had experience with independent study and have developed materials to implement such programs and will develop many more prior to the opening of the school. Teachers have also had experience with large group instruction and correlated core programs. Therefore our problem seems to be understanding the needs of individual students and the mechanics of scheduling.

Continually throughout the foregoing discussion we have pointed out the

importance of counseling. It is therefore vital to the program that efficient and an adequate number of guidance counselors be available to understand and direct each pupil's program. If we are to help this age group a guidance counselor must know each child, his potential and his problems, and then have the authority to direct his program. We therefore recommend that students be placed in a house plan with not more than three hundred students and that the counselors working with the teachers direct his educational program for the three years he is in the middle school. It is most difficult to obtain this type of guidance in the elementary school and we feel that the sixth grade is none too early to begin careful guidance for the educational program. Counselors should not only direct the academic program but offer guidance with the social activities and psychological problems to relieve as many tensions as possible. Social competition can often be as destructive as athletic or academic competition. Standards will thus be set by competent people who understand the child, with scholarly experts to aid the academic progress to as great a depth as the student is able to handle.

We are interested in developing educational plans and goals for the near future. We believe that the middle school will facilitate this change because it will be a visable, tangible desire of our aspirations and thus spur the staff to develop the best possible program to accomplish its educational goals. On the other hand, it is too easy to regard a junior high school building as "just another junior high school". This attitude somewhat hinders the enthusiasm and creativity needed to develop an excellent educational program for pre- and early adolescent children. Thus the change to a new organization, a fresh start, may be the most important advantage because it will help to produce change. May we reinterate that the program and change of methodology in teaching and attitude toward student needs is the most important facet of the middle school. Changing grades in a building will mean

little if you follow the same program and procedure. In some schools the sixth and ninth grades may not be ready for this change. If you have a K-12 organization with complete correlation of curriculum, opportunity for sixth grade students to utilize high school lab facilities and master teachers for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students then you have no problem.

May we point out in conclusion that the master teacher and efficient guidance are the keys to the success of the program and that in our belief no organizational plan or any other administrative or structural change, in itself, will improve the educational program. There is sufficient evidence to show that homogeneous grouping, team teaching, small group instruction, class size, ungraded programs, television, programmed instruction, flexible scheduling, the middle school, or any other administrative device has little if any effect upon the improvement of academic achievement of students. In order to have any of these succeed there must be a change in teaching methodology and the curriculum. If we group students and teachers the same way and use the same curriculum nothing has happened to change the learning process. However, it is our contention that any of these, including the middle school, provides the <u>opportunity</u> for improving the curriculum and the methodology and thus could have an impact on the achievement of students academically, socially and emotionally. If we have tried innovations and have failed, perhaps it is because we failed to see the <u>opportunity</u> and taken advantage of it. Certainly there is no opportunity to progress if we do nothing. Too many educators complacently "give up" or become critics because at first blush they fail to reap success, when the real problem was failing to properly see the opportunity to change curriculum and methodology. The real work begins after the organizational change and too often we have felt that the job was completed once we accomplished the organizational change. Any improvement in the educational process or method-

ology or teacher effectiveness which can be accomplished by organizational change or any administrative device can probably be attained without either. However, the change in organization or administrative device may and should facilitate and encourage the improvement. Thus fundamentally we are discussing curricular change and teacher performance.

J. Lloyd Trump, in the NASSP Bulletin (February 1963) states:

> "Those who teach, and those who supervise and administer, can adopt any of three general attitudes toward curricular changes. A few will oppose change by a forward-to-yesterday attitude. They will conjure up many arguments to defend the status quo and ridicule technological gains. Most persons, however, will adopt a neutral position: Let someone else do the work; we'll not oppose the innovation, nor will we foster it. The rest encourage and spearhead educational progress by planning and conducting experiments and demonstrations seeking better ways of doing things.
>
> "Regardless of which of the foregoing attitudes toward change is accepted in a given school, the leadership needs to plan carefully so that the purposes of the changes or the refusal to change are defined and understood. New programs need careful backstopping so they have a chance to demonstrate their worth. The evaluation at the conclusion needs careful planning to show the varied effects of the changes or what the present program has achieved."

We at Jamesville-DeWitt believe a better program can be developed. We are sure it must be approached with care and study and we will plan careful evaluation as we proceed. We have set up an in-service training program for teachers who will be assigned to the school and we will constantly be attempting to improve the program. We are not sure all of our hypotheses here presented are entirely valid. However, we feel little real study has been carried out to determine the type of curriculum or methodology that would be best for this group. We therefore propose to cooperate with the Syracuse University School of Education in conducting experimentation and evaluation for at least three years in order to test the hypotheses here presented. We further plan to experiment with various teaching devices and programs and evaluate them as we progress. The best educational program is not simple to develop. It it were, someone would have discovered it long ago. However, we must keep trying.

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PROCEDURE

1. Board of Education directed Superintendent with staff and Central New York Study Council to study grade placement in school buildings to provide optimum opportunity for total pupil growth July 1963.

2. Cooperative Research Service of Central New York Study Council presented written report September 1963.

3. Report of study by staff December 1963.

4. Twenty meetings held with teachers, parents, clergy, service groups, citizens, and other school men from outside the district during January and February 1964.

5. Decision to build Middle School to include grades 6-7-8 approved March 11, 1964 and staff instructed to make further study of building plans and curriculum.

6. Curriculum Council and staff held meetings on philosophy, program and building plans March 1964 through November 1964.

7. November 1964, staff presented plans for specific building needs for each department to Board and architect.

8. Preliminary plans drawn and Board proceeded to hold public information meetings. First with community leaders and then with general public.

9. Thirty-five information meetings held during January 1965.

10. Public voted approval February 1965.

11. Inservice programs for teachers conducted during the school year 1965-66, including staff visitation of schools in the east and mid-west.

12. Further in-service program with teachers during 1966-67 school year on specific operational problems.

A RECENT SURVEY OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

by William J. Yost - 1962

A recent study was designed to gather information relating to the different varieties of junior high school organizations in the state of Texas. It revealed, for example, that of the schools studied 54.1 per cent have a 7-8-9 plan of organization, 20.6 have a 7-8 plan, and 20 percent have a 6-7-8 plan. The percentages preferring each type of organization were approximately the same: 53.2 percent preferred the 7-8-9 plan, 18.9 percent preferred the 7-8 plan, and 22.9 percent preferred the 6-7-8 plan.

The administrators of the schools studied were asked the strengths and limitations of the various types of organization. A general summary of the findings appears below;

7-8-9 grade organization

Strengths	Limitations
1. Children of this age and maturity range are compatible.	1. Limitations caused by the inflexible requirements of the Carnegie Unit System.
2. Better counseling.	2. Undesirable influence of older ninth grade students on the more immature seventh grade students.
3. More opportunities for ninth graders to lead activities.	3. Very wide age span with a larger number of failing students.
4. Better preparation for high school.	4. Programming difficulties (use of special facilities, scheduling for small numbers).
5. Less exposure of younger students to more sophisticated students.	5. The tendency to make the 7-8-9 school a "little high school".
6. The best climate for academic and athletic competition.	

7-8 grade organization

1. Prevents the wide range in individuals that exists in a three-grade plan, (a more homogeneous group).	1. Lack of strong student leadership.
2. Simplifies development of the curriculum.	2. A two-year period is not sufficiently long to develop school spirit.

7-8 grade organization (con't)

Strengths	Limitations
3. Fits the building program better. (Obviously applies to a local situation.)	3. Lac[illegible] adequate special facilities an[illegible]aff.
4. Compatibility of seventh and eighth grade students.	4. The students are too young for an athletic program required in the junior high school.
5. Elimination of emphasis on ninth grade athletic program.	
6. Easier articulation between grades.	
7. Ease of separation of seventh and eighth grade students. (Obviously an administrative convenience. It is doubtful that seventh and eighth graders need be separated in all classes.)	
8. Better guidance possibilities.	
9. Easier social transition, especially in boy-girl relationships.	
10. Economic factors.(No lab costs, etc.)	

6-7-8 grade organization

1. The maturity range of 6-7-8 vs. 7-8-9 makes transition from elementary school to high school easier.	1. The immaturity of the sixth grade students.
2. More flexible scheduling is allowed since administrators are not forced to program around ninth grade.	2. The limitations on activities because of lack of facilities.
3. Plan is good for smaller school with limited facilities.	3. The difficulty of scheduling with sixth graders.
4. Teacher recruitment is improved even though teacher duties remain the same.	4. The wide variation between sixth and eighth grade students.
5. Overemphasis on junior high school athletics is eliminated.	5. The lack of teaching materials available only in a high school.
6. Sixth graders are given more responsibility.	

6-7-8 grade organization (con't)

Strengths	Limitations
7. The plan removes ninth graders and subsequent problems.	
8. Provides a more academic approach as opposed to "little high school" idea.	

Conclusions resulting from this survey. -- There appears to be general agreement that:

1. Existing facilities help to determine local practice.

2. The Carnegie Unit system is a controlling factor in that it restricts flexibility in grade nine.

3. Which age levels to include in the junior high unit is an important problem (affecting school spirit, leadership roles, boy-girl relations, etc.) and it deserves careful consideration.

4. Whether ninth grade students should be in a high school or in junior high presents the most difficult problem.

5. Many aspects of the activity program are influenced by the inclusion of the ninth grade.

6. A saving of money on special facilities, such as laboratories, would result from the placement of the ninth grade in the senior high school.

7. The total educational and psychological growth through counseling services is greater when the ninth grade is in the junior high school.

8. Transition of students is easier in the 7-8-9 unit.

9. There may be duplicate offerings in the ninth and tenth grades when the ninth grade is in the junior high school.

There appears to be disagreement concerning:

1. The grade levels at which children should be placed in the junior high school.

2. The maturity of the children of the sixth grade relative to that of the seventh and eighth grades.

3. The difficulty of flexible programming under the different grade level combinations.

4. Teachers available for various junior high school grade level combinations.

Review of Summary of Cooperative Research Study by C.N.Y.S.S.C.

Special Issues in Junior High Programs

A review of the purposes and status of the junior high school and the trends that affect it brings to light some of the things the junior high school needs to function well. Junior high school teachers and administrators should study them to determine how well they suit the conditions in the individual school.

Staffing: School systems still need to secure classroom teachers and principals who have chosen the junior high school as their field and intend to remain in it. Educators believe that at most levels of education children need contacts with both men and women teachers.

Improved Teacher Education: Colleges still largely neglect the junior high school field. Unless better preservice and/or inservice educational opportunities are made available to those in junior high school field, many junior high schools can exist in name only.

Research: Too little research is available on adolescent psychology and junior high school education. Too few teachers and principals are aware of what is available. Teachers and administrators in the junior high school should study both the curriculum and the nature of early adolescence if they are ever to provide a curriculum that fully meets the needs of the children.

Buildings and Instructional Materials: Too often the junior high school has been housed in a building previously used as a high school or an elementary school and has had to work within the limitations of these buildings. This and lack of the instructional materials have often hampered the establishment of an adequate junior high school program. Reference books, encyclopedias, audio visual materials, all available to the individual classroom, should make the junior high school program more effective. The library should be adequate to meet the demands of the program, the needs of adolescent interests and curiosity, and the necessity for independent study and research.

Supervision of Instruction: More flexibility in the junior high school has made large demands on classroom teachers. They need a type of supervision adapted to the instructional program. Adequate supervision should maintain a certain consistency in instructional methods and aims and yet help each teacher see what he can contribute best to a unified effort to educate junior high school youth. There is great need for "freeing-up" the school program to encourage creativity and independence among students.

Improved Articulation: The criticisim has often been made of the junior high school that it merely provides two breaks in the pupil's school life instead of one. This is less true where an integrated program is followed and there is a gradual introduction of departmentalization. The junior high school cannot have a satisfactory program unless classroom teachers and administrators take a look at the elementary school and the senior high school when they plan their work.

STAFF AND CITIZENS REPORT

REASONS FOR THE 6-7-8 PLAN

1. Sixth graders need greater stimulation and departmentalization of teaching, special facilities, and equipment, e.g. shops, and labs, in order to advance according to their ability.

2. They are at an academic age where they need reinforcement and extension of skills through application.

3. Special teachers and special programs are needed for children undergoing adolescence.

4. The sixth grade child of today is more knowledgeable and anxious to learn new things. In terms of required curriculum the fourth grader today is learning many of the things taught to the sixth grade of ten years ago. What will the situation be twenty-five years from today?

5. Acceleration and individual differences will increase in the future. Therefore we will need a better program.

6. Specialists would be available to sixth graders; as the children develop they could branch out easier than they do today.

7. Permits better grouping and opportunities for individual and continuous progress for sixth grade pupils.

8. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade children are undergoing the common experience of physiological change.

9. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades facilitates extending guidance services into the elementary school.

10. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades provides an opportunity for gradual change from the self-contained classroom to complete departmentalization.

11. The sixth grade student would have better facilities such as language labs, science labs, and shops.

12. Children can have a fresh start in a new school one year earlier. That is, they can detach themselves from old labels, make new friends, etc.

13. This age group needs personal attention which they do not receive sufficiently in any of the other types of organizations. They are at an awkward stage and need to be together with excellent teaching personnel.

14. The end of eighth grade is a natural break. Many ninth graders are mature enough to fit in and profit by the high school program. They feel like and want to be senior high school students.

Reasons for 6-7-8 (con't)

15. The leadership advantages we give to sixth graders could be given to fifth graders.

16. This plan would put children from the entire district together one year earlier than at present and aid sociologically.

17. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades permits ninth grade students to take advanced senior high school courses.

18. The ideal pattern to develop a child's self-direction is through a gradual easing-off process which 6-7-8 facilitates.

REASONS AGAINST THE 6-7-8 PLAN

1. There is not too much evidence on the 6-7-8 organization because of its newness. Therefore, we cannot be certain that it is a good form of organization.

2. There may be some social adjustment problems in placing ninth with twelfth graders.

3. Sixth graders are too young to be pushed very hard academically or socially.

4. Services or programs may be cut from the elementary school.

5. We do not know what this form of organization will do to the fifth grade.

6. This may decrease the proportion of male teachers in fourth and fifth grades.

7. There might be a scaling down of standards in a K-5 school (especially in chorus, band, and physical education) because the pace setting sixth grade is absent.

8. The elementary school challenge of working with children at the sixth grade level would be missing.

9. Administrative techniques and procedures would have to change.

REASONS FOR THE 7-8-9 PLAN

1. This form of organization is well accepted. Staying with the status quo will not cause much upset.

2. Jamesville-DeWitt has a mobile population. Only 56% of the 1963 graduating class attended the seventh grade in our Junior-Senior High School. For the 1962 graduating class the comparable figure was 44%. A 6-7-8 organization might cause difficulties for pupils transferring into and out of the school system.

Reasons for 7-8-9 (con't)

3. Some ninth graders are not mature enough to fit into and profit from the senior high school program.

4. The academic pressure caused by teachers who are accustomed to senior high school students and the competition of advanced high school students is too much for ninth graders.

5. Ninth graders are socially too young to be with older teenagers; the social pressure caused by non-acceptance is detrimental.

6. Seventh-eighth-ninth athletic teams are composed of students in grades eight and nine with a preponderance of ninth graders. A sixth-seventh-eighth organization would probably weaken the junior high school athletic program.

7. Total educational and psychological growth through counseling service seems greater when the ninth grade is in the junior high school.

8. In New York State, teachers are trained to teach 7-8-9, not 6-7-8.

9. Secondary teachers claim they have as good a knowledge of and rapport with students as elementary teachers.

REASONS AGAINST THE 7-8-9 PLAN

1. Ninth graders are physically different than seventh and eighth graders. Two-thirds of the girls and one-third of the boys in the seventh grade have reached puberty. All of the ninth grade boys and girls have gone through puberty.

2. Teacher utilization and optimum student academic advantages would favor including the ninth grade in the senior high school.

3. The mechanics of high school (e.g., the Carnegie Unit, election of courses, college transcripts) start with the ninth grade.

4. When ninth grade is separated from 10-11-12, certain courses and equipment must be duplicated.

5. The transition from sixth to seventh grade is difficult.

6. A ninth grader is too sophisticated for seventh and eighth grade children who want to imitate ninth grade and grow up too fast.

7. Too often a junior high school disolves into a "little high school" where students mark time academically.

REASONS FOR THE 8-4 PLAN

1. More emphasis could (perhaps would) be given to the traditional so-called fundamentals; the teacher would be with the pupil for the entire day or most of it and thus could provide better instruction and guidance.

2. The gap between elementary and secondary education would come later when the pupil would be better prepared to cope with it.

3. Home-school cooperation might be more easily attained.

4. "Growing up" socially would occur later.

5. Schools would probably be nearer the home of the pupil, and transportation problems might conceivably be decreased in grades seven and eight.

6. Articulation between elementary and secondary education would be more easily achieved since there would be only one bridge to effect rather than two.

REASONS AGAINST THE 8-4 PLAN

1. The curriculum for grades seven and eight might in some instances be much narrower (without or with much less adequate libraries, shops, science rooms, physical education facilities, homemaking rooms, arts and crafts rooms, guidance provisions) and thus would provide for the needs of these pupils markedly less adequately.

2. The program of activities for grades seven and eight might tend to be very limited and inadequate.

3. If an enriched program were attempted, it might, under certain circumstances and in a number of schools, call for considerable duplication of special rooms and equipment which would not be utilized fully.

4. An enriched program might require itinerant teachers and leaders of special subjects and activities.

5. The opportunities of pupils in grades K-6 might be seriously interfered with by making provisions for the older pupils; to provide equivalent opportunity, both capital outlay and current expense costs would tend to be considerably greater.

6. Securing of elementary teachers for grades seven and eight would be difficult.

7. Adequate guidance and necessary experience to facilitate bridging the gap to secondary education would be more difficult to provide.

8. The gap between elementary and secondary education might easily be so wide that it would be extremely difficult to bridge.

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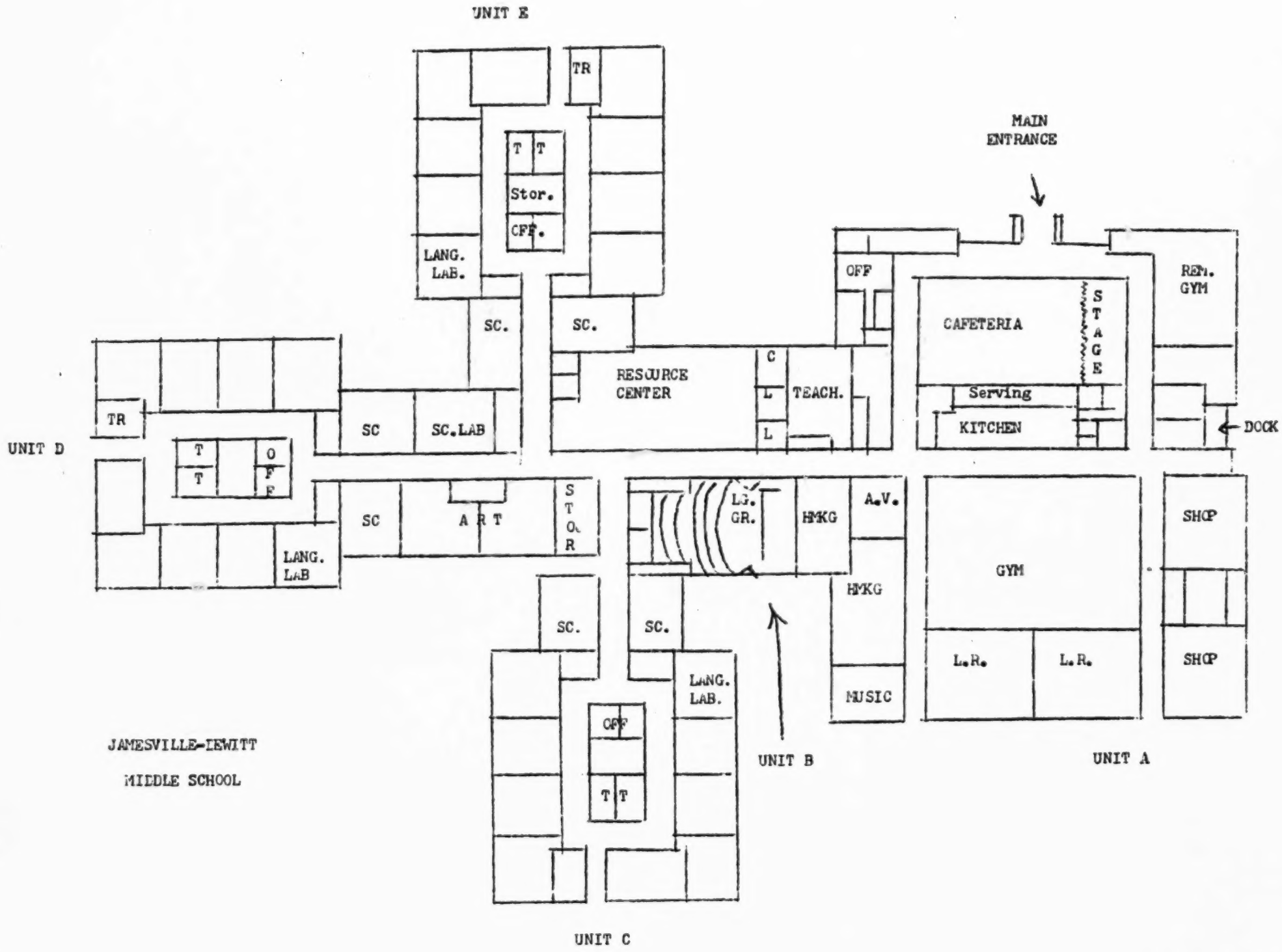
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